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SUBJECT: MOSQUE SERMONS FROM SAUDI ARABIA - MARCH 17: AN
ANTI-AMERICAN SERMON IN THE EASTERN PROVINCE, AND IMAMS
PREACH AGAINST CORRUPTION AND IN SUPPORT OF THE STOCK
MARKET.

Classified By: Consul General Tatiana Gfoeller, for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

FROM THE EASTERN PROVINCE: AN ANTI-AMERICAN SERMON

¶1. (C) At the Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal Mosque in Khobar on March 17, Shaikh al-Qahtani delivered an aggressively anti-American sermon to an audience of approximately 500 worshipers. The sermon was the strongest condemnation of the United States yet delivered by this imam. He began by recounting his recent visit to an old acquaintance who had graduated from an American university and continued living in the U.S. for many years. The imam said he was shocked to find a sticker on his friend's door that displayed an American flag and the slogan "Keep it flying." (Note: He read the slogan in English and immediately translated it into Arabic. End note.) The imam remarked to the congregation that he could not comprehend how a Muslim could display the flag of a country that has been nothing but hostile to Arabs and Muslims.

AMERICA DECEIVES MUSLIMS

¶2. (C) It was apparent from the imam's comments that he had done some research on USG public diplomacy programs in the Middle East. The sermon continued with an attack on America's allies in the Middle East and their failed efforts to polish America's image. He called on the congregation to never believe America and its supporters. Muslims, "should restrict their judgment of the world's only superpower to its deeds." He spoke of what he called "failed American efforts to improve its public image in Arab and Muslim countries, and that the status quo will continue and may even get worse as long as Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, Afghanistan and Palestine remain fresh on people's minds, unless, of course, the United States soon undertakes corrective measures." The imam enumerated what he called America's failed propaganda wars meant to deceive and blind Arabs and Muslims alike, while its military and law enforcement authorities continue to target and discriminate against Muslims.

HUGHES RESIGNS IN DESPAIR

¶3. (C) He then recounted the role of American officials, telling the congregation that Karen Hughes, the latest "American PR wizard" resigned (sic) out of sheer frustration

despite her hard work and that this has also been the case with her predecessor." COMMENT: The correspondent notes that the imam seemed to appreciate Hughes' repeated visits to Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkey. END COMMENT.

U.S. WAR CRIMES RECOUNTED

¶4. (C) Warming to his theme, al-Qahtani then accused the United States of war crimes against many people, including Palestinians, Afghans, Iraqis, Japanese, Koreans, Vietnamese and even native American Indians. He announced the number of killed and injured as a result of American "aggression." He declared that Western policy is based on the principle of "Protecting the White Man" at any cost, including waging wars of genocide against others. As an example, he noted how American settlers had reduced the number of native Americans from 15 million to a mere 200,000 in the early part of the Twentieth Century by resorting to wars, killings and other illegal and inhuman means, such as spreading communicable diseases among Indians, namely chicken pox. He said the settlers accomplished this by giving the Indians contaminated blankets after they had been driven from their homes. Extending his antipathy beyond the United States, the imam cited other examples of genocide perpetrated against Muslims, including Eastern Europe, the Balkans, Spain and other places.

IMAM CONDEMNS THE STOCK EXCHANGE, AS WELL.

¶5. (C) The second portion of his sermon was a reaction to the stock market decline in the Gulf states and Egypt in recent days. He expressed displeasure that so many people had abandoned their homes and jobs just to focus on the stock market. He criticized businesses for abandoning their real work to focus on the stock market. "When ... an agricultural

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company," he noted, "stops doing what it's supposed to do just for the sake of money (it) is inexcusable. There's more to life than money. We should all learn the lessons that can be derived from the crash. Every man and woman should understand that honest work is God's way of earning a living.

I am told many office workers and employees, particularly teachers, have been seen day trading, either outside their work places or at their desks, when they should have been working trying to legitimize their salaries. I call this stealing, pure and simple, and employers have every right to demand refunds. As for those who have invested through banks and businesses that offer interest, I say their loss is double because they have lost the world and they have also lost the Hereafter." He then insisted that the market decline was responsible for numerous suicides and attempted suicides, and an unbelievable number of divorces, fights, and un-Islamic behavior. He considered it a blessing in disguise. "There may be short cuts to becoming wealthy, but the only sure way to keeping what you own and living a happy, settled and healthy life is through work."

FROM MECCA: IMAM DENOUNCES CORRUPTION AND ITS SOURCE, THE MEDIA

¶6. (U) During his March 17 sermon from the Holy Mosque in Mecca, renowned preacher Shaykh Dr. Abd-al-Rahman al-Sudays, denounced corruption in its many forms, saying that Islamic shari'ah seeks construction and not destruction and warned against corruption, which leads to ruination. The greatest form of corruption, the imam announced, is disbelief in God. Another serious form of corruption, in the imam's view, is the "poisonous intellectual and cultural moral invasion, which has brought trends of deviation and corrupted many people, especially young men and women. It has polluted their minds, distorted their beliefs, deprived them of their social values, diverted them from their religious and moral principles, and subjected them to storms that lead to confusion, decadence, and defeatism." The sources of this subversion are "the media that pump waves of corruption and forms of deviation through their shameless channels and

networks." They corrupt societies and families through the vice and immoralities they spread, he charged.

THE ENVIRONMENT IS BEING CORRUPTED

¶7. (U) Also earning the imam's censure were "those corruptors who polluted the purity of the environment and the beauty of nature by spreading chemical substances, carrying out devastating nuclear tests, and releasing poisonous gaseous waste as well as the arms race in weapons of mass destruction."

FINANCIAL CORRUPTION ALSO THREATENS FAITHFUL

¶8. (U) Another serious form of corruption, the imam said, is the "spreading of what has befallen the nation's economy through forbidden transactions and usury. The materialistic race between the followers of world stock exchange markets and the crises suffered by these markets are only warnings." He concluded this section stating, "were it not for God's mercy and the king's great gesture (note: referring to government efforts to stop the market decline. End note.) a disaster would have occurred. But many people now look forward to the Islamization of these money markets to make their dealings conform to the shari'ah rules."

IMAM ALSO CONDEMNS LAWLESSNESS AND IRAQ

¶9. (C) He then decried the "corruption that has rent hearts ... caused by misled renegade factions ... awakening the sleeping sedition, spilling forbidden blood, and indulging in crime." He also noted "There is also the corruption suffered by our brothers in the Land of the Two Rivers (Iraq) through the various kinds of tragedy, persecution, siege, displacement, and killing, among the disasters caused by this form of corruption were the attacks on mosques and the terrorization of worshippers in them."

WOMEN CORRUPTED IN ORDER TO CORRUPT ISLAM

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¶10. (C) In his second sermon of the day, the imam continued on the theme of corruption, but amended his inventory of corrupt practices to show that the "biggest corruption is the bemoaning of women's rights," adding "it is an exposed lie and an old deception. Our dire enemies want to turn the Muslim woman against her Islamic religion, values, and ideals and rebel against her Muslim dress, chastity, and shyness."

¶11. (C) After this litany of corruption and acrimony, the imam ended th sermon with a prayer to God to support Islam an Muslims, humble non-believers and unbelievers, proect religin, and make this and other Muslim coutries safe and secure.

FROM MEDINA: IMAM ENDOSES STOCK EXCHANGE...

¶12. (U) From the Holy Mosque in Medina on March 17, Shaykh Salah Budayr delivered a sermon favorable to the stock exchange, recognizing that "the desire to develop capital and exchange commodities for something better is the motive behind the commercial transactions and the economic dealings, as well as the incentive for the exchange and disposal of capital and the assumption of the risks of its development and investment."

...WITHIN LIMITS, MANY LIMITS

¶13. (U) But he qualified this endorsement by saying: "We must consider the shari'ah rules on the profit coming from trading and investment so that it will be permissible profit and correct investment." The shari'ah requires that: "trading must not be in the sale of forbidden things and their means, such as shameless space channels, magazines that contain pictures of naked women and call for sin, instruments

of entertainment, CD's and blue movies, and alcohol, cigarettes, and so on." Additionally, the "profit must not stem from usury or deceptions, which seem to be correct sale outwardly, but are usury inwardly." Nor can the profit derive from "unfair dealings, such as giving wrong descriptions of goods to tempt people to conclude the deal, or hiding any faults in them, which is a form of betrayal, deception, and cheating." Less clearly he also asserted: "profit must not stem from risk-taking, which means risking one's funds for the sake of funds, which may or may not materialize." The profit must not arise from "monopolizing and hoarding commodities so as to raise their prices and thus exploit people." In a final, and most timely admonition, in the wake of the wild oscillations in the Kingdom's stock market, he cried: "Oh, Muslims, whoever enters into any market dealing or plots to cause harm to investors by exploiting their ignorance and lack of experience, tampering with the funds of or plundering the poor and cheating them is doomed to punishment." Gfoeller